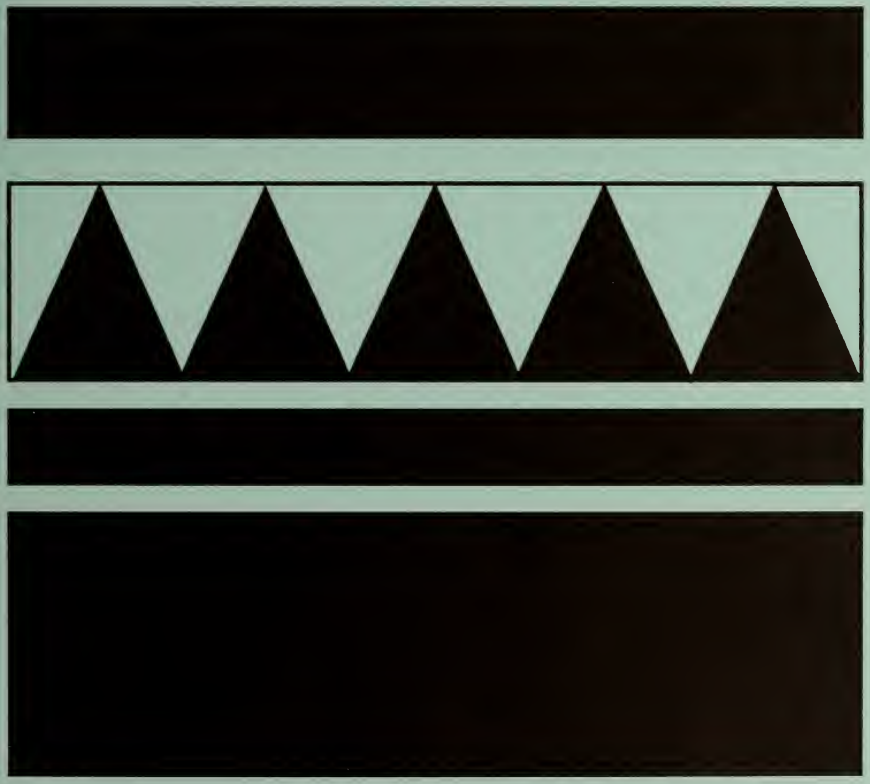
Eye Damage

Office of Minority Health
Resource Center
PO Box 37337
Washington, DC 20013-7337

"Retinopathy"



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High blood sugar, for long periods of time, can cause damage to your eyes. Retinopathy (Rĕt-́n-ŏp-́ə-thē) is a serious eye disease caused by high blood sugar. Retinopathy (Rĕt-́n-ŏp-́ə-thē) can lead to blindness.

This booklet will help you learn how to take care of your eyes. You can prevent or delay damage to your eyes. You can prevent blindness.

You can prevent eye damage and blindness.

People with diabetes are at high risk for eye damage. Retinopathy (Rĕt-́n-ŏp-́ə-thē) is a serious eye disease caused by high blood sugars over a long period of time. High blood pressure is another risk factor that makes a person at a high risk for retinopathy.

You can prevent or delay damage to your eyes. You can prevent blindness.

How does high blood sugar affect your eyes?

There are many blood vessels in your eyes. High blood sugars, over a long period of time, can damage these blood vessels. When the blood vessels are damaged, they may bleed into the eye. This can cause blindness if not treated. This condition is called retinopathy.

Healthy blood vessels in the eye.

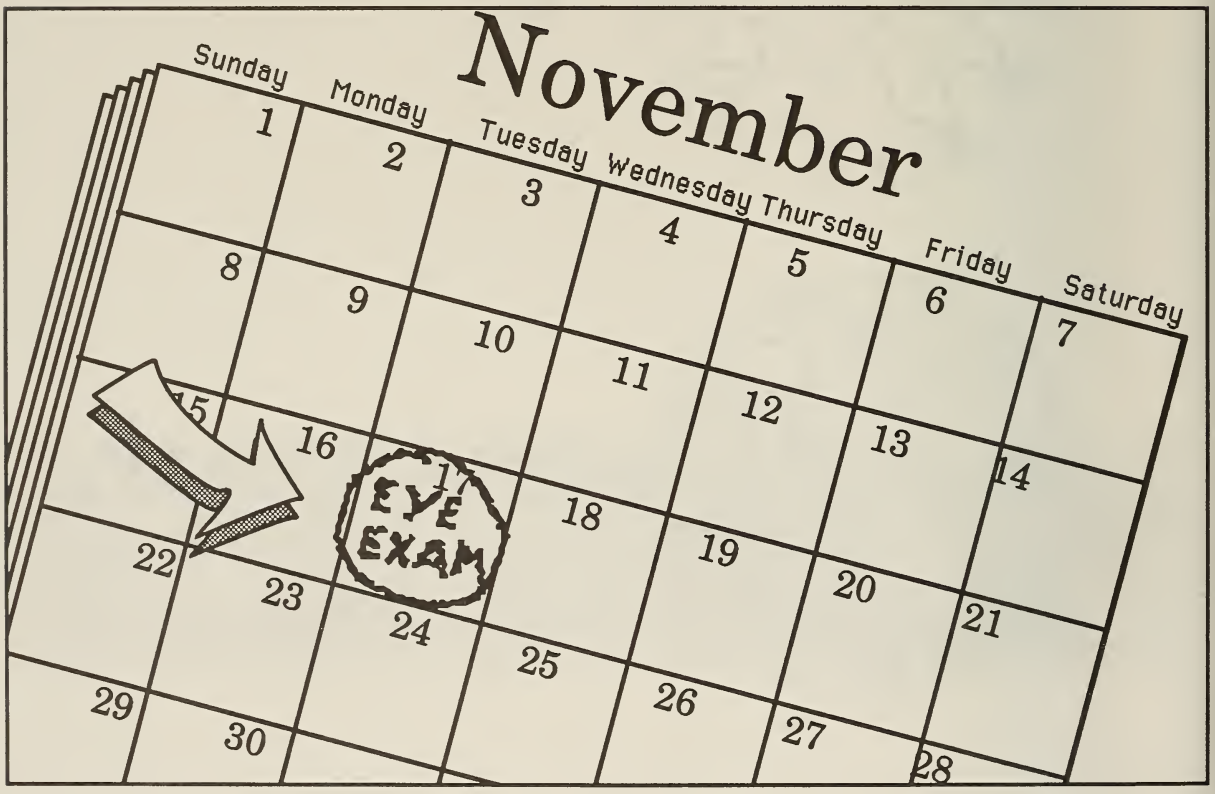
Bleeding blood vessels in the eye.

How will you know if you have retinopathy?

There usually are no signs of retinopathy. You may not have a vision change until there is severe damage. This can be delayed or prevented by getting eye exams and laser treatment when needed.

How often should you have your eyes checked?

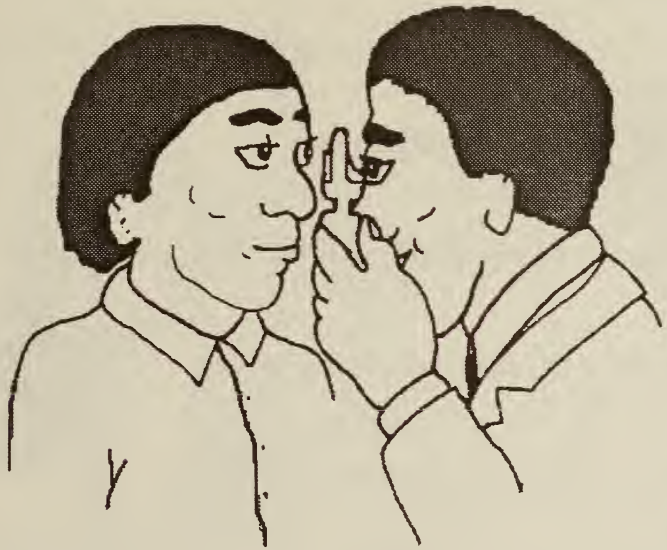
A person with diabetes should have a dilated eye exam at least one time each year. You can prevent blindness by having a yearly eye exam.



How does your doctor check your eyes?

Eye drops will be put into your eyes. This will allow the doctor to see the blood vessels in your eyes. The doctor will look for changes in the blood vessels. This is called a dilated eye exam.

Some eye clinics have special cameras that can take pictures of the blood vessels in the back of your eyes.



Eye exam

What can you do to take care of your eyes?

1. Get an eye exam at least one time each year.

2. Control your blood sugar.

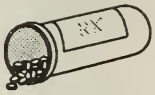
   - Lose weight if you are overweight.

   - Make healthy food choices.

   - Be active. Walking is a good way to become more active.

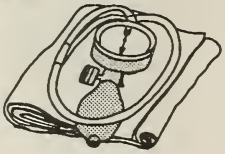
3. Control your blood pressure.

   - Take your blood pressure pills as prescribed.



   - Cut down on salt and salty foods.

   - Get your blood pressure checked often.



4. Stop smoking.

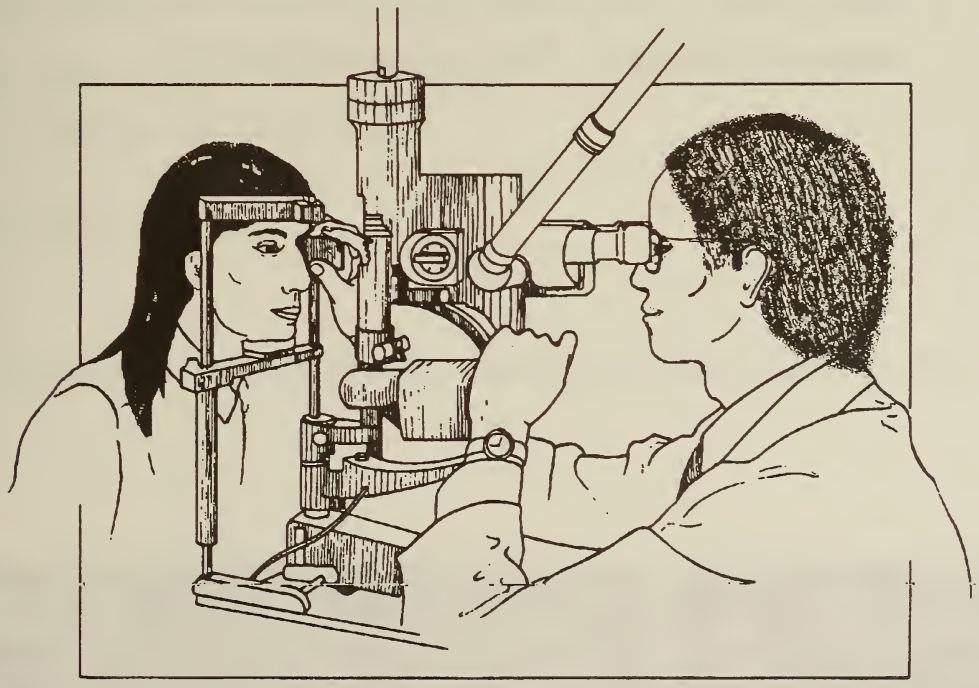
Is there treatment for retinopathy?

Yes. Laser treatment may help to stop the bleeding in your eye. Laser treatment may not improve your vision if damage to your eyes is severe.

How does laser treatment work?

Laser treatment uses a beam of light. The light passes through the eye to stop the blood vessels from bleeding.

Laser treatment is usually done in the doctor's office. You will be able to go home after the treatment is finished.



Laser Treatment

What other eye problems are you at risk for if your blood sugar is too high?

- **Blurry vision**. High blood sugars can cause your vision to be blurry.

- **Cataracts** (kăt-ə-răkt): A cataract is the clouding of the lens of the eye.

- **Glaucoma** (glou-kō-mə): Glaucoma is an increase in the pressure of the eye. This can cause blindness.

Good blood sugar control can prevent or delay eye problems.

See an eye doctor right away if you have any vision changes or vision loss.

These are the things you can do to take care of your eyes:

- Get a dilated eye exam at least one time each year.
- Control your blood sugar.
- Control your blood pressure.
- See an eye doctor right away if you have any vision changes or vision loss.
- Stop Smoking

You can prevent eye disease and blindness.

The clinic staff can help you.

Talk to the clinic staff about high blood sugar and eye damage. They can help you learn to control your blood sugar.

Clinic: _____

Phone number: _____

NOTES

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